

Muchnic, Suzanne. "Black and White" Review. *Los Angeles Times* (Part VI), 8 July 1983, p. 2-3.

A handsomely orchestrated group show called "Black and White" gets back to basics of form as well as palette. Though works by about 20 well-known artists stretch over more than 30 years and cover a dozen or so aesthetic approaches, the assembly of art seems to focus on reductive abstraction, thus setting itself in sharp contrast to the current wave of emotive Neo-Expressionism. Ellsworth Kelly's large v-shaped canvas, comprised of a white square and a black rectangle, and Richard Serra's massive black paint stick-on aluminum square, tilted and cropped to fit a corner, dominate the front gallery and set the tone of a varied exhibition.

Chronologically, "Black and White" begins with the era of Abstract Expressionism, crisply represented by a 1950 Ad Reinhardt canvas and Franz Kline's 1955 "Study for Mahoning." Both artists use broad black brush strokes as building blocks in dynamic compositions. From the '60s comes the light touch of Agnes Martin, in a gridded ink drawing, and the solidity of Jasper Johns whose rows of numerals are the unlikely subject of a surprisingly luxuriant, all-black encaustic painting. Works from the '70s include everything from a roughly textured beeswax-and-resin panel by Lynda Benglis to Bryan Hunt's zeppelinlike sculpture that juts out perpendicular to a wall near the ceiling.

Part of the show's appeal lies in unexpected relationships arising from a sensitive installation. Shapes in Claus Oldenburg's "Soft Inverted Q's in Stages of Deflation" (1974), for example, are echoed in a white-outlined duck's head in the center of Robert Moskowitz's adjacent canvas (1973). And once you divert your eyes from the duck to barely perceptible stair-stepped space in the black painting, after-images of ducks ricochet through the space to the point that you can almost hear them quacking.

Lest I leave the impression that "Black and White" is mostly a forum for subtle restraint and stark formality, let me add that Donald Sultan's "Black Tulip," drawn as a phallic silhouette in velvety black charcoal on rumpled rice paper, is about the sexiest plant imagina-

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ble. (Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., to Aug. 13.)

—SUZANNE MUCHNIC

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